



## AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

Press release

For immediate release

### **AKDN partners with the Paris Peace Forum**



**Paris, France, 12 November 2019** - His Highness the Aga Khan, founder and Chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), today joined over 30 world leaders for the opening session of the second Paris Peace Forum. Initiated by French President Emmanuel Macron, the Forum was founded on the principle that international cooperation is key to tackling global challenges and ensuring durable peace. The Forum was launched on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armistice, marking the end of World War I.

“In my experience, the vital conditions for stability in the world today include an emphasis on local participation, the promotion of pluralism, and a strengthening of Civil Society organisations. I am pleased that the Aga Khan Development Network is once again partnering with the Paris Peace Forum and that the Global Centre for Pluralism is also hosting an event at this year’s Forum. Pluralism is certainly a central component for peace and progress,” commented the Aga Khan.

Last night, the Aga Khan joined visiting heads of state and government for a dinner on the occasion of the Forum, hosted by President Macron at the Elysée Palace.

The need for pluralism as a fundamental value in society has often been mentioned by the Aga Khan, calling it an “indispensable foundation for human peace and progress.” He believes that as human society is essentially pluralist, “[...] Awareness of the diverse contributions of people, across times and cultures, to global civilisation is essential in engendering respect and understanding.”

Encouraging pluralism has therefore been an aim of many AKDN programmes; these include rural economic development and irrigation schemes that bring together diverse communities in Pakistan to improve their quality of life; inclusive reading programmes for children in Kenya; a project to integrate immigrants in Lisbon; and the recent Aga Khan Music Awards that illustrate the cultural pluralism that exists in the Muslim world, as music can “transcend old boundaries of time and place,” according to the Aga Khan. AKDN’s ultimate aim is to nurture successful civil societies in which all citizens, irrespective of cultural, religious or ethnic differences, can realise their full potential.

As an expression of the Aga Khan's commitment to pluralism as essential for stable and peaceful societies, in partnership with the Government of Canada, he established the Global Centre for Pluralism in Ottawa, to promote research, education and knowledge exchange on this subject.

At the Forum, Meredith Preston McGhie, Secretary General of the Global Centre for Pluralism (GCP) made opening remarks at a side event entitled, “*How can pluralism strengthen peace? Lessons from the GCP 2019 winners,*” where she highlighted the urgent need for pluralism in peacebuilding efforts. She went on to moderate a discussion between two of the 2019 Global Pluralism Award winners: Aung Kyaw Moe, Executive Director, Center for Social Integrity (working in Myanmar); and Bojana Dujković-Blagojević, of *Learning History that is Not Yet History Network* (history educators who teach the history of conflict in their countries of the former Yugoslavia).

Also during the day, Onno Ruhl, General Manager of the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH) was on a panel entitled “*Surviving Climate Wrath: Building Resilient Infrastructure in an Age of Global Warming.*” The panel discussed the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and engaged a range of stakeholders with a view to identify specific areas where international cooperation and mutual exchange can promote disaster and climate resilient infrastructure. Other speakers included representatives from AXA Insurance, India’s Natural Disaster Management Agency, European Climate Foundation, and European Commission’s International Cooperation & Development Department.

On 13 November, Meredith Preston McGhie will participate in a panel discussion on “*In Defense of Pluralism: Including Minorities in Diverse Societies,*” while Najmuddin Najm, CEO of the Aga Khan Foundation, Afghanistan, will participate in a discussion entitled, “*Handle with care, local governance and conflict prevention in fragile states.*”

For more information on AKDN’s work, please visit: [www.akdn.org](http://www.akdn.org) or email: [info@akdn.org](mailto:info@akdn.org)

## NOTES

Founded by His Highness the Aga Khan, the *Aga Khan Development Network* is a group of private, international, non-denominational agencies working to improve living conditions and opportunities for people in specific regions of the developing world. The Network’s organisations have individual mandates that range from healthcare (through over 200 health facilities including 13 hospitals) and education (with over 200 schools) to architecture, rural development, the built environment and the promotion of private-sector enterprise. Together, they work towards a common goal – to build institutions and programmes that can respond to the challenges of social, economic and cultural change on an on-going basis. AKDN works in 30 countries around the world, employing approximately 80,000 people, the majority of whom are based in developing countries. The AKDN’s annual budget for non-profit development is approximately US\$ 950 million. AKDN agencies conduct their programmes without regard to faith, origin or gender.

Read online: <https://www.akdn.org/press-release/akdn-partners-paris-peace-forum>